

A Noble Servant's Focus for Ministry: A Godly Example

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[0 : 00] He is a good and gracious King in giving us His Word, the Bible, and in giving us His Word made alive in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to be in 1 Timothy, God willing, this morning. As the Lord leads, we have stepped away from our verse-by-verse ministry in Genesis.

Just long enough for me to bring a series of expositions from 1 Timothy chapter 4, reminding us all of the need that we have as a church family, and the responsibility that we have as a church family for sound doctrine, for the pure Word of the living God giving order to us as God's family, as a local assembly here at Grace Church Williamsburg.

What I'd like to do is begin in chapter 4, verse 1. But the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by the hypocrisy of liars who have been seared in their own conscience, who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God created to be shared in, with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good. Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

[1 : 48] In pointing out these things to the brothers, you will be a good, or it could be translated noble, you will be a good or noble servant of Christ Jesus, being nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following, but refuse godless myths fit only for old women.

On the other hand, train yourself for the purpose of godliness. For bodily training is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance. For it is for this, that is, for godliness, that we labor and strive because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Command and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but show yourself as a model to those who believe, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

So the title of my message for this morning is, let's see if it'll get there, you may have to advance me. Did it go to sleep? Not Nolan, the computer.

[3 : 26] There we go. Let me see if it'll advance again, bro. Yep, I got it now. I think that's what happened. A noble servant's focus for ministry, and we're dealing with just verse 12, and we're talking about a godly example.

Everything that Paul has been saying to this point leads up to him telling Pastor Timothy that he needs to live the example that he's preaching.

Now, there isn't a pastor on the face of the planet that can do that perfectly, but we are commanded to strive. Pastors are commanded to strive in a life of holiness, and a lot of our ability to live in that holiness is carried on by your prayers for us.

It's why Greg and I continue to ask you in your ministry to your pastors to make prayer for us a priority. Please pray for us.

Now, Pastor Paul is telling Pastor Timothy, who is young and seeking to be a shepherd among the people at Ephesus, the Ephesian church, he's telling him to be faithful in these ways as he bases his life and his ministry on the scriptures, on sound doctrine, sound teaching, and so a noble servant's focus for ministry.

[4 : 50] Friends, listen now. Now, each person attending a church, each person attending this church, has expectations of what they want that church or this church experience to be.

Every one of you come through those doors with certain expectations. If you come for the first time to this church, you may be able to reflect back on that first time. You came through the door, perhaps knowing a little bit about our church from a friend or a relative, someone you knew, a neighbor, or perhaps you went online and tried to get a feel for what we were like as you read through our documents.

But everybody comes through that door with a certain expectation about what they want this church experience to be. Every church leader has expectations of what he wants church life to be.

You realize that? Every single pastor who shepherds in God's local assemblies that we call churches has an expectation. We come with that too.

We want to see you grow. We want to see you put a premium on holiness. We want to be able to see you welcome us as pastors and shepherds into your life to hold you accountable for what you believe and how you live.

[6 : 11] Boy, that's anti-American, isn't it? You're going to stick your nose in our business. Well, what we need to understand from the message today is our business is God's business.

It is our business because it is God's business and we are part of His family. When we did this Christian thing, when God saved us, we didn't sign up for a spectator sport.

We didn't sign up for an individual kind of thing even though it was personal to each one of us. We were adopted and born into a family, a spiritual family.

Now get this. The world that we live in, in our community, Williamsburg, the world and Satan himself also certainly have designs for what church life should be.

Do you realize that? Satan uses people to accomplish his ends. That means he will use you. He will use people outside of our fellowship.

[7 : 19] He will use pastors for his ends. If we are not careful to encourage one another in living in sound doctrine, the truth of the Lord, we will drift, won't we?

It happens to pastors. It happens to people. And we expect it to be that case with unbelievers. But when all of that comes in and gets in the church family, we're in trouble.

And so Paul is warning Timothy about this very thing. We are working through a passage that deals with a pastor's focus in ministry.

Now, given the reality, much of what Paul is saying in chapter 4 is aimed at this individual named Timothy. Granted, the context allows for that and even demands it.

However, we also understand that this letter was being read in the church in Ephesus so that the people would better understand God's priorities for church ministry or service in his body.

[8 : 32] That's what we're looking at. This instruction, then, isn't limited to just pastors. People, God's people, need to know what God is commanding his pastors to command.

And that's verse 11. Look at with me again, if you will, at verse 11. This was from last week's sermon. He says to Timothy, command and teach these things.

Whatever your translation may say, the literal rendition of the Greek there is command. Not just teach, not just instruct, and certainly not suggest.

When we're dealing with God's Word, preachers are to stand before the assembly and command the things that God commands. So we're as hard as the Bible is hard, we're as soft as the Bible is soft.

That's our ground. All of that in between is where we camp out in God's pure Word and instruction for the church. But it is very, very important that we all understand that we're being called onto the same page, the same doctrinal understanding of what the church is.

[9 : 48] We're applying this focus, this biblical focus in ministry, to each person who would serve at Grace Church Williamsburg, each member of our church.

Why would we do that when the context is mainly dealing with Timothy as a pastor of this church? Here's the reason. Because every member of Grace Church needs to share in a godly focus on God's essentials for ministry.

Don't you need to understand what it is that we're supposed to understand as shepherds in terms of the priority of the church? Absolutely you do. Because you need to get in and support that.

And so when we're doing it, it's not some big shock to you. You have a godly, biblical expectation of how your shepherds will shepherd. That helps all of us stay on the same page and keep the main thing the main thing.

So this is an encouragement not just for Timothy, but for the people as well. In 1 Timothy 4, and I'm looking now at 11 through 16 particularly, Paul is speaking of what I'm going to call six ministry essentials.

[11 : 03] There it is up on the screen for you. Six ministry essentials that help us maintain a godly focus together in the life of our church. When you think about all the different expectations and biases and things you've learned and things you've heard and things you, the baggage that you bring in, perhaps, and I'll talk about this in just a few minutes, the baggage that pastors can bring in.

When you put all of that together, how in the world are we supposed to be together on the same doctrinal page as we move forward in serving the Lord as we serve each other?

How are we going to do that? This is what Paul is helping Timothy understand. Last week, we dealt with the first essential from verse 11, and it was a biblical focus on pure doctrine.

Of course, Paul would start there. He starts with the purity of God's teaching in Scripture. In other words, Timothy, you don't make this up.

You don't clever your way into it. You don't become a clown who entertains my people. You give them the pure milk, the solid meat of what I've written as food for their souls.

[12 : 22] That's your mandate, Timothy, and that's the mandate that every under-shepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ is called to minister to you. We lead you to green pasture, and we lead you to clean water through the ministry of the Word of God, and then we stand as sentinels while you feed on that, and what are we looking for?

Wolves, false teachers, anything that would sneak in unawares and try to poison you in your walk with the Lord to feed you something that would become for you poisonous, gangrous, disease-ridden for you.

We want to deal with that. We want to cut that off before it gets to you. That's our role and responsibility as shepherds in the church. We need to be vigilant. Well, we can't be any of those things if we're full of ourselves.

I can't be any of that if I'm worried about clevering my way through my ministry. I can't do any of that if I'm worried about impressing you, coming off as looking competent.

What am I called to do? What is Greg called to do as we shepherd you in the pure word of the Lord Jesus Christ? We are called to be faithful men in living godly before you and keeping God's word before you.

[13 : 43] We're to deal with sin in our lives. We're called to the same things you are as we serve the Lord, walking faithfully with him. So this first one, a biblical focus on pure doctrine sets the foundation for everything he's going to say.

Verse 12 then is our verse for this morning and it brings us to this second priority or this second essential that we're going to focus on.

It's a biblical focus on being a godly example and that follows. We're going to read the word, we're going to ground ourselves in the pure doctrine, the pure teaching, the truth of the word of God and then we're going to move out from that truth and give it feet, bring life to it in how we speak and how we live and how we think.

We want to take that pure doctrine and make it live in the lives that we have toward each other and then toward a watching world.

Now I want you to notice if you would friends how he begins here in verse 12. Let no one look down on your youthfulness. Why does he have to say that? Because people are looking down on his youthfulness.

[14 : 58] What are we dealing with in this? Well let me throw it up here for you just to let you see. Let no one look down on your youthfulness. This is in the form of an imperative.

Now you've heard this enough from this pulpit to know that whenever the Greek uses a verb form that is imperatible, it is a command. This is a command. This is not a suggestion.

This is not something that he's just simply urging Timothy to think about and try to apply. He's commanding him let no one look down on your youthfulness.

The Greek word I have up there for you neotetas neotetas it simply means youth. Youth. Here Timothy is faced with his own humanity in ministry.

He is faced with the real world of human weaknesses. That's what this is expressing. First of all his own weaknesses.

[16 : 03] Let no one look down on your youthfulness. And the weaknesses of those he serves. There are people who are looking down on him. Everything about this statement is expressing human weakness in the church.

We all have it. We all have to deal with it. It's just part of the reality of being people isn't it? We can't run from it. We don't seek to hide it veneer it gloss over it.

We put it right out there on the table and we talk about it and we deal with it with each other in great patience in kindness and with much grace. But deal with it we do because we have to.

Timothy was being challenged in terms of his personal and his ministry credibility. We would say he had no cred. That's a problem.

It's all due to his young age. Some people associated his youthfulness with inexperience and inability. In part he was inexperienced and he is young.

[17 : 08] That's true. But Timothy was also discipled by the apostle Paul. Paul trained Timothy for this role personally.

Wow. And Paul also installed Timothy as pastor in this church based on the support of the elders the pastors of that church the fellow workers who identified the Holy Spirit working in Timothy and identified him as a biblically qualified man.

Earlier in the chapter in 1 Timothy 3 you'll see some of the outline of the character qualities of a man who is qualified to be a shepherd an under shepherd in any local church that is truly trying to serve the Lord.

He runs down that list there in 1 Timothy 3 you'll see it down through 1 through about 7 then he talks about the same character qualities or similar in deacons so as we look at these kind of men we're not looking for professionals we're not looking for men who are successful in business or any other worldly enterprise as that would suggest to us they could be successful in leading the church no it doesn't work like that we're looking for men with a certain character and we can't compromise on that Timothy is that kind of man he is a biblically qualified man by his spiritual character before the Lord nevertheless listen to this now nevertheless there is a certain dynamic at work in the church in Ephesus where Timothy is pastoring it is not easily remedied the scandals of the false teachers who had gone before

Timothy left and left their scars on the church are still there many of them are still in the church and Timothy is there having to deal with these false teachers and Paul is writing and telling Timothy you need to deal with this issue you've heard me say this now a couple times in the messages that I've been bringing from 1st Timothy 4 no doubt at all in my mind these things combined on Timothy to create in the people a sense of lingering doubt and anxiety toward any leadership the church in the church particularly Timothy's leadership now did you hear what I said what the false teachers and pastors and leaders prior to Timothy have created in this church what is still a dynamic a lingering dynamic relational dynamic spiritual dynamic in this church still going on is creating all kinds of issues for this young pastor he inherited it and the people have these lingering doubts and biases and scars as they look at

[20 : 14] Timothy and they kind of do this number with him we'll see we'll see you ever gone into a situation like that with a pastor or a new church and you kind of hold him back we'll see we'll see I'll give you a C plus on that sermon yeah I'll give you a D minus on the way you dress we're gonna have to up the game on your dress thing here and some people would give you a D minus because you're wearing a tie you just can't win you can't he should be parting his hair on the other side you laugh but you say I've heard this one lady said that she would never vote for the pastor that the committee brought to the church as a candidate because while he was preaching he did this while he was talking to him he played with his wedding ring and it distracted her and she told me to my face I didn't vote for him that was it that's all it took so you think while you're up here we're just and then you get in trouble for that because you don't have a personality

I'm so stiff lighten up lighten up no listen we understand this dynamic we understand that people walk through those doors and they bring stuff with them they bring their experiences with them and we don't ask them to check those things at the door we ask them to surrender those things to Christ and not make judgments about us or about you or about us as a church family us as shepherds based on what they've experienced in the past it's just like this for us as well what the people in Ephesus are dealing with I'm just trying to bring it down to the nitty gritty for you so that you see these are people these are our brothers and sisters so we understand trust is an issue when you've been burned by other people now listen to this it goes church experience by either the leadership and or people in the congregation pastors come into churches and if they've been burned in a previous experience they can bring that in to the congregation you have to

I tell these young guys sometimes when I'm able to talk with these young pastors and they give me an opportunity to weigh in on their lives because I used to be a younger pastor I know what that's like you come into a situation if you're not careful see I wasn't expecting that I wasn't expecting the trouble to be within the church I was expecting it to come from without not from within I was naive green wet behind the ears and immediately in my first church of service we got burned big time and it hurt and if you're not careful I tell these young guys you'll bring all of that into your next congregation you have to continue to tell yourself these are not those people these are not those people and even if they are because sheep are sheep you smell you bite you kick you scream right and then you've got your pastor a human being a flawed man in way over his head preaching a message that he is is not any more than you able to live up to apart from grace and you put all of us together in that mix oh my goodness what do you do well

I'll tell you what you do you run to Jesus with us you run to Jesus amen you run to the cross you run to grace you run to truth and you camp out there and you constantly ask God to show you your heart you constantly ask God to deal with your stuff and you pray for your pastors and you believe the best about your pastors we're going to talk more about that I'm going to fill this in this is kind of a you know I'll just go ahead and let you know as I did this exposition and worked through this I thought oh this is great this is going to be a great opportunity for me to talk about all the things that I want to talk about no this is an opportunity for me to Jeff Jackson to be reminded of what I'm called to and I needed it I needed a refresher and a reminder from the Lord for my own soul for my own refreshing especially given some of the stories that I've been hearing over the last months or so from different people who've come to our church and have been in some very hard experiences it broke my heart to hear it for them it broke this is sobering sobering stuff all

I'm trying to say is human nature being what it is church life being what it is there's not a wide gap between our brothers and sisters at Ephesus and us there's not and I'm trying to show you that I have prayed this prayer for quite some time now and I continue to pray it and here it is God please make me hard to offend and even harder to disappoint I don't want you to know Greg and I characteristically as pastors who are easily disappointed who wants that who wants to be married to that who wants to be in a church where the shepherds are constantly giving you indications that they're disappointed in you you're just not quite measuring up get with the program what's wrong with you people how many times do I have to say this a shepherd called by the

[26 : 05] Lord is that the way Jesus deals with me no Jesus does not deal with me that way Jesus doesn't deal with you that way if you're hearing that as the tape that's playing in your head about your God you need to change up because that's not God will God discipline you and deal with you yes he will but he disciplines you and deals with you as a father to his son to his daughter and he's perfect he's not like us have you ever disciplined your kids and had to go away and say there was a lot of me in that and then go ask their forgiveness yeah me too well God doesn't do that when he disciplines us and deals with us he deals with us in much grace and in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of his own heart it's hard for us to get past that because of all the stuff we have to deal with on earth and all the baggage that we bring into it and again folks we bring that into the church so I pray the prayer

God make me hard to offend and even harder to disappoint we can't afford to wear all of this on our shoulders so one of the issues in church life carrying over from ancient times is that a lack of integrity brings a lack of credibility in ministry that's not rocket science you see it and you go well yeah the absence of integrity in the false teachers that Timothy is having to now stand up to eventually became clear to people in the congregation and many of them were called out some are still left young Timothy is having to live down the fallout of their failure and their falsehood now folks again I say to you please please do not lump Greg and I into some pastoral category with other pastors who hurt you and burned you and done things to you and said things to you please don't do that any more than you want us to lump you into congregations who burned us and believe me brothers in the eight and a half almost nine years

I've known this man he and I have gone through many many battles together and many of them very very unpleasant where we leave and drive around and weep before we go home and then we go home and eat my comfort food pancakes because Suzanne knew what was coming and when we got home she had them cooking listen we just need to be fair in terms of coming to the scriptures and letting God's word dictate to us how we deal with these situations Paul is a genuine apostle the apostle Paul is the genuine article he's teaching God's truth Timothy is Paul's choice to confront these issues and write this church put it on the right direction the right course young Timothy is having to live down what the false teachers have put in front of him but he can do it as he follows Paul's example stay in the word young man minister the truth he's going to tell him later in this passage in this chapter pay close attention to yourself and to your doctrine we'll get there

God willing we'll get there that'll probably be next week integrity and credibility are ageless indispensable assets for pastoral work they are foundational characteristics of God's true workmen now let me ask you as you come to be a part of this church family to serve here to minister here to be to literally be a part of the lifeblood of who we are how important is integrity in your life how important is it for you to bring spiritual integrity into this family how important is your credibility in your spiritual walk among us none of us are seeking the accolades of man I hope not the fear of man the approval of man we're seeking the approval of the Lord but as we minister together over time and get to know each other we see the warts that each of us have we recognize the failures and the weaknesses and the faults that we all have and what do we do we love each other don't we we love each other we try to minister Jesus to each other in the hope that the prayer that as I minister

Jesus to you you will be more conformed to Christ more like Jesus as you minister Jesus to me I will become more like Jesus this is what we're about we're about disciple making that's a disciple and we're trying to grow together in that what will ruin it your agenda that's what that's all it takes what will ruin it for you to have an agenda other than that that's all it takes because I promise you by your nature you will find a way to slip that agenda into what's going on here and now we're in trouble you say Jeff as you look back at me the same with you guys right you and Greg absolutely only double for us we have a greater ability to sabotage this thing than even you do why because we're in leadership so the responsibility that we have is a sober one isn't it this is what

[31 : 57] Paul is communicating to pastor Timothy I can only imagine the many many many times evenings walks that they took together travels that they made on the way and Paul asking young Timothy about this what would you do in this situation what does God's word say about this let me tell you how Isaiah dealt with this very thing in chapter 40 boy to have the apostle Paul doing that with Timothy readying him and preparing him and sobering him for what God was going to do in his life as a pastor folks this is a ministry must it puts supreme emphasis on the church's responsibility to install only biblically qualified men to the position of pastor and shepherd now just think on it a moment with me think on it a moment let your minds go a little further in this particular point with me pastors are by biblical necessity male are they not that is a requirement of the scriptures it's a command pastors are to be men now ask yourself this question based on the fact that your pastors are to be men or male ask let's ask some questions who do we want and trust or who do we want and trust to be around our wives our daughters and our sons these are guys these are men you've heard the scandals

I've heard them I've been I've been in on the fallout when when a pastor has taken another man's wife in the congregation in one case I took a new pastor and I wasn't even there 30 days and I went to an associational fellowship with the pastors in that group of churches represented in that area and they were all buzzing about a very high profile pastor in the area and a very large church in the area who had for five years carried on an illicit relationship with his secretary he had five or six kids she had five or six kids and for five years that man stood in the pulpit hiding that that reality five years and you know what the pastors were debating in that in the group as I walked into that meeting that day you know what they were debating whether or not he should remain as pastor of the church I know that take

Mike it took his breath away it did me too brother what is that indicative of that debate it's indicative of men who are not looking to the scriptures for the answers to those issues because the scripture is super clear about what needs to happen in that case that's not a shepherd Greg and I are not perfect men we fight sin just like you do but there's no room for us to hide to those kind no no room for Timothy pastors are men as men who do we want around our wives our daughters and our sons you understand the day we live in predators look for places like this they think we're a bunch of slouches they think the humility and kindness and grace that we minister make us vulnerable what they don't understand is that God has called sentinels to duty and those sentinels need to be on duty 24 7 there's no rest there's no respite from that kind of watch care none and so it's a task that is very demanding

I'm not whining I'm just telling you the truth here trying to help you better understand look what kind of men do we need and need to trust to help us work through issues of our salvation in our that goes both ways so how much time do we want to give it before we start trusting you you see how we do well I'll come here but you you gonna have to prove you're trustworthy we have well take me to chapter and verse we're called in love and love says I believe the best doesn't it first Corinthians 13 love believes the best and even when the best falls short what does love do cover no record of wrongs he said that's later in the passage we're called to that kind of love we're called to trust now

I do understand I do understand how difficult that is when you've had a difficult situation in your past but folks we can work through that can't we in the Lord can't we do that together can't we put our arms around each other and move through that together yes we can God's called us to be those kind of people we need to model that for them don't we the outside world looking in and asking themselves how in the world am I ever going to get over this whatever this is well we model that for we tell them in the church there is no problem or obstacle too big for God's grace none that isn't something that we say in a trite way we believe it I'm preaching it right now Timothy deal with reality deal with this as foundational to your ministry what kind of men do we want what kind of men do we need to trust to help us work through the issues of our lives who do we want to go and sit down with and bear our souls to what if you're caught caught up in a sin what if you're caught up in some secret issue what if something is going on in your marriage or your family and you're to and know that they will keep them to themselves and not only that they'll actually have something of help of benefit to offer me who who would

[38 : 21] I do that oh I know I'll go pay 130 dollars an hour to sit in front of a psychiatrist or a psychologist after all they have Christian in front of their name it's called the agape center of psychiatric health or well-being or us in scripture in truth say boy Jeff you know you preachers like to say that well you know what I'm called to command that so I'm just going to do it and just move on that's what God wants us to do let me say it this way in answering all of this what kind of men do we need to trust look the church family needs sober minded men who approach life and ministry from a growing fear of the Lord say Jeff you're getting all of this from let no one look down on your youthfulness just bear with me and you'll see yes I am we need even even in his youthfulness Timothy is called to be a sober minded man and if he hadn't shown the apostle

Paul that he could be a sober minded man he wouldn't be in this he had a holy reverence for God that ordered his life so that he maintained integrity when he was in front of the people and when he wasn't Paul never would have installed him if he didn't have that dear friends the character integrity sincerity humility and unwavering commitment to protecting the church at all costs are what God actually works into the hearts of his true shepherds I wasn't born with this this isn't some skill what you see me this isn't some skill that I developed on my own this is a calling from the Lord that God has worked into my life not all men are called to do what we're doing this is just part of it this is the more visible aspect there's lots going on like the duck under the water thing to shepherd lots going on to shepherd you know right

I say that kind of panicky but we're not panicked we just we just paddle over to the next one and we paddle over to this one you know and what do we do when we get there we bring the grace of the truth of the Lord to bear on whatever we face you know we got no magic it's the truth it's the word keep in mind as I've been saying these are not perfect men these are not perfect men but they are men who are giving themselves and listen carefully if you would to a persevering pursuit of what a persevering pursuit of a sincere and pure devotion to Jesus we're not perfect but we're pursuing the Lord Jesus and we won't quit King Jesus we just won't quit there's no quit in us a true shepherd of God does not know quit we fall we stumble we face plant and by the grace of

God we get up and we go back for more you say that's crazy no that's calling that's calling that's the Lord true shepherds are men who are committed to serve Jesus unto death and every day die to themselves that we would be available to the body in a spirit of truth and so we hold each other accountable to that now if I went on and on you'd say boy what man alive is sufficient for this not a one not a single one it is a miracle of God's grace he calls any of us to do this but he does and he gives us what we need in Christ to be those shepherds and never quit on King Jesus never it's not an option it's not even in our vocabulary another thing we need to know about these men this is this is Timothy I'm trying to give you a character description of Timothy these men have not grown bitter with life you hear me these men have not grown bitter with life they show the clear signs of becoming meek in the

Lord and well I tell you your pastor I've had to really work on this because I may be small but somehow the Lord has given me this tenacious spirit that when I see error and untruth and injustice it's like moth to flame I'm just kind of have to grab me and hold I just gravitate to it and I've had to learn to get that off my face I've had to learn I'm not fighting people I'm fighting a spiritual battle and the people out there who malign me and mistreat me they're the mission field and of course they don't appreciate who I am and what I stand for because it's all about authority people hate authority they just do we hate authority unless we have it these men show the signs of a spiritual steadiness gained through many trials and much grace over time a spiritual steadiness who would you rather go to when you're in crisis in your life and you need somebody to sit in front of who's going to approach you in a way that's going to be beneficial and a blessing to you about a very difficult thorny situation that's just ripping at your heart a clown or a sober minded man an entertainer or a man who's grounded in the word who can look you in the eye and bring the truth of

[44 : 31] God to bear on your soul which would you rather have the fun guy you say Jeff can it be both I've found in my experience no no there's nothing fun about going through life and dealing with sin in our lives friends please mark this well your pastors and each of you will assuredly face challenges from people in our combined efforts to serve the Lord here at Grace Church it's just we've already experienced it's going to happen we're people we're people starting with your pastors we are imperfect people these challenges are going to come they're going to come in many forms they're going to come at different times in the life of our church but they will come sometimes it'll be your weaknesses that will contribute sometimes it'll be pastoral weaknesses that will contribute sometimes they'll combine I don't know because we are people we face the same foes we face the same foes the world the flesh and the devil now did you notice who I didn't say

I didn't say that those people are our enemies the system of the world is an enemy to us but not our mission field we can't lose sight of the fact that the people out there who are so nasty and wicked and full of themselves those are the people that we're trying to show the love of Christ for and to right and we do that by showing Christ's love to each other we share in a spiritual struggle against deceptions discouragements distractions oh my goodness how how long is the list of distractions that want to pull you away from spiritual things and put your emphasis and resources on things that are not eternal they're legion Paul was decisive and resolute in his counsel to young Timothy considering what Timothy faced at the church in Ephesus he commanded Timothy to conduct himself and his ministry in ways that would not allow anyone to disregard him in his role as pastor did you hear me

I command you Timothy do not let anyone disregard you in your role as a pastor at Ephesus don't let them do it that's a command my goodness you want to ask him how in the world am I supposed to do that I can't make them do right Paul I can't make them want the truth I can't make them like me or respect me how how how how in any ministry in any church there are going to be obstacles to overcome challenges to face for us to be effective in our ministry to each other we have to prepare ourselves to face these challenges God's way how how are we to do that your focus during these times of challenges need to be the difference between moving forward in Christian love and grace or succumbing to selfishness and an unbiblical agenda so this would apply both to serving and being served by each other look

I can't give you any of the details it's too fresh but I took a phone call this past week from someone out of state involved in a church and to make a long story short this particular church family has been involved for about five or more months almost six months embroiled in this situation where the pastor was caught in sin and I can't go into any details and betray the confidence but this pastor was caught in sin and when confronted the pastor owned up to it because the evidence was so plainly clear there was no getting away from it well unfortunately the situation has now turned into this terrible terrible thing where the pastor is not showing repentance and people have good folks who love the word and wanted to be part of that ministry have left the church because of the way they see it being handled and the person that

I talk to is grounded in the truth and wants the truth to prevail and ask me am I seeing this wrong am I approaching this wrong am I being too hard and I said absolutely not you're standing on the truth of scripture and you have to do that even if you're the last man standing you cannot compromise on that where is the situation today well most likely based on the things he told me that the current leadership who's kind of filled the void now is saying their mantra is this we're just tired of this we just want it to go away and more than likely they're going to reinstate him you say is it wrong to reinstate a pastor who stumbled no but there's a way to go about it and it depends on what he's done unfortunately this church is in a bad way friends and it's a scary situation for them they've lost a lot of people and it looks like it's going to go from bad to worse what does this tell us a wrong an unbiblical focus in these kinds of situations will lead a church in the wrong direction so ministry in the church is done by people for people and that's reason enough for things to go awry in ministry isn't it because you have people involved that's it that's all it takes people bring to the mix a variety of issues and ideas biases and baggage ignorance and intentions so the cold reality is that ministry in the church can degenerate into a battle ground of what

[50 : 52] Jeff competing competitive ideas agendas instead of a fertile ground for the cultivation of love and good deeds that's what we're trying to protect our ability to come together and do love and good deeds would you be surprised to reflect on and to know that Jesus faced these same things as he served the Lord you surprised about that Jesus faced the same thing why because he's dealing with people you can't get away from it the perfect Lord of the universe had to deal with all of this that we've been talking about now coming back at him and he always did the right thing he always had the perfect motive and said the perfect thing at the perfect time and they still hated his guts he just couldn't measure up they would have been the people that would have said things like this oh I don't know about that where he's taking everybody and all that's just not a good fit for me really not a good fit for you well my goodness what do you have to have for it to be a good fit the perfect lord of the universe is the one teaching you and they hated him they lied to him and they ended up spitting on him and torturing him to death the prophets faced it many of them died horrible deaths preaching to

God's people who didn't want to hear it say were they God's people Paul and the apostles had to deal with it you guys know all of the disciples were martyred except for the apostle John Timothy now faces this in his ministry and folks we're going to face it in ours and we already have it's one thing to command Timothy to command it's another thing for him to faithfully do what he's been told to do Timothy you was intended to aid not hinder the transmission of gospel truth and that's what we're about we don't want anything tripping us up in our desire and in our calling to minister God's truth to each other Timothy was probably in his early thirties that's what the majority of commentators would think that's what I thought as I read through this and thought I wonder how old he was he he probably wasn't in his early twenties probably early thirties perhaps some of the leaders were older maybe they were more experienced in life in ministry it's possible

Timothy was intimidated by some of these guys nevertheless he couldn't allow his young age and his inexperience to lend excuse to those who would discredit and devalue his ministry in the church as the teaching elder why because what he's teaching is truth not because he's all that folks because what's on the line is the truth Paul knows that Timothy is bringing them the truth don't let anything stand in the way of you doing that Timothy not even them just keep preaching and teaching the truth that's what we're called to if more pastors would commit themselves to step into ministry and preach and teach the truth and not quit on it not compromise on it we take this land man the Holy Spirit would work through his word and we take the land I believe that because I believe in God's word as truth he's bringing truth to

God's people someone had to lead the leaders and Timothy was that someone he was God's man but how was he to do all of this how exactly was he to face off with all of those guys who would seek to discredit and devalue his ministry you know I remember when I was my first staff position out of seminary this would have been about 1994 or so I was in my early 30s and I had the face of a 16 year old so I told a few of you this before I grew a beard I had to do something Jeff to get some cred right I had no cred at all even though I had been ministering the community for two years that this church brought me on as the family life minister my job was to minister the truth of God in counseling and discipleship and among families and do different things that would help promote in the families a godliness so spiritual leadership in the that was a big job and

I grew a beard because nobody nobody had it's like what do you have to say you young pup you haven't had any life yet little did they know this is Timothy what are you going to do to get some credibility so that people will take you seriously how are you going to pull that off look let me throw these up here I think I've how does he do that look how does the pastor not succumb to all the worldly hype the man centered expectations heaped on him from those who see the church as more of a playground just another entertainment venue to help distract them from reality on Sunday don't bore me with all the lecturing up there about the Bible give me something that make me laugh take me away help me feel better about that's what the text says let no one look down on your youthfulness but contrast show yourself as a model to those who believe in word in your conduct in your love in your faith and in your purity his answer to his critics detractors and doubters was that of his godly life period example means exactly that pattern or model be a pattern be a model be an example the very opposite of the model of the false teachers here is our model for answering our critics inside and outside the church we are to answer our critics primarily with our godly lives so

[57 : 33] Paul highlights five areas of being a godly example if you don't mind I'll just run through them real quickly with you the first one as you see in the text let no one look down on your youthfulness but show yourself as a model to those who believe and do that in word he starts there I think it's very interesting Paul begins with what we say and do word and conduct and he starts with word speech why because we're always running our mouth we're always weighing in we're always saying something very few of us go through the day quietly contemplating and listening well it's hard to listen well it's easier just to and fill the void Paul begins with his speech with his speech words communication Timothy's mouth could not afford to get in the way of his ministry it needed to compliment his ministry his ministry of what commanding the truth it is not easy to command people to the truth it is not easy to hold people accountable to the truth you say

Jeff are you and Greg truly responsible for what we believe and how we believe it and how we go about applying it in our lives absolutely we are commanded to command you to live by the truth we're not being nosy when we get in on your life and we challenge you in some way about something that you're believing that's aberrant we're not being nosy we're not being busy bodies we're being faithful of course we do that in grace graciousness and love and kindness with much patience the Lord tells us as we correct but we have to do it the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart you hear that Luke 6 45 the mouth speaks from the overflow the heart you don't say anything that doesn't originate in your heart in your soul nothing it all comes out of who you are the center of who you are Timothy then needs to guard his heart with all diligence that's Proverbs 4 23 put a guard over your heart with all diligence

Timothy because the matters of life the issues of life flow from your heart and your mouth is going to give evidence to what's in your heart just let you talk when I'm in counseling sometimes and somebody I have a sense that someone is being a little recalcitrant about the truth and dealing with stuff in their life or they're they're hedging on it they're fighting it I just keep asking questions that draw them out because I know it's just a matter of time before the mouth is going to tell me what's in the heart I just need time time is not on your side at that point you trying to hide something it's not on your side it's on mine I just keep you talking pretty soon I'm going to hear something and go hey let me take you back to something you said do you realize you said that and I see the sweat start in the eyes and then I know now we're at a place where we can deal with the truth now I know we can do some work and what you're going to find in me is

I'm going to sit here with you and we're going to get through this mess together right this is how we approach this Timothy needs to guard his heart with all diligence how many preachers have discredited themselves through silly sinful unbridled speech I've heard pastors say the most silly ridiculous thing sometimes from the pulpit how many church members have been guilty of this just consider a couple of verses I don't have time to go into them but let me just share them with you real quickly if you look at Ephesians 4 Ephesians chapter 4 another letter of the apostle Paul we're kind of doing a deep dive here a little bit but I'll move through it Ephesians 4 and if you look at verse 15 but speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into him that is Jesus Christ who is the head of the church notice speaking the truth in love that's our mandate we're not just to speak we're to speak the truth we're not just to speak the truth we're to speak it in love the truth can be hard sometimes we need to be careful and speak it in love all right couple of more just to give you a context for how to do this look over at

Ephesians 4 25 therefore laying aside falsehood we want to lay aside anything false in us and do what speak truth lay aside what's false and speak truth to each other verse 29 let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth but only such a word as is good for building up what is needed so that it will give grace to those who hear and do not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption unwholesome is a Greek word that can be translated rotten putrid worthless let no putrid rotten unhelpful sordid word come out of your mouth not even one because it's useless instead we want to minister what is good for building up good means suitable what is suitable in the moment for building them up in their faith it may be a rebuke you may have to rebuke them but you can rebuke them in love in kindness and grace with much patience grace is the outworking of good will we are to give grace to those who hear that is we are to have good will toward them in what we're doing and then finally

[63 : 22] Colossians chapter 3 go over one other book of the Bible Colossians 3 and you've got a good running treatise here that will give you a lot of ammo for dealing with your mouth and your heart verse 8 but now you also lay them all aside that is all these things he had mentioned before lay aside wrath anger malice slander and notice abusive speech from your mouth abusive speech do not lie to one another since you put off the old man and have put on the new man with its renewal in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ it's a wonderful renewal a spiritual renewal look at what the Proverbs say I'll just put a time when there are many words transgression is unavoidable that's what I said I just keep them talking the one who guards his mouth preserves his life that's wisdom isn't it we all need to be God purposed in what we say you say Jeff all the time yes all the time is there any time we're not serving the Lord or living before him all the time when we speak we need to speak the careful planned intention of being a godly blessing to the one we're speaking to he moves right away then to tie speech with what conduct action deeds this is his lifestyle visibly lived out among people this is the lifestyle so I'll ask you a question to help you contemplate this what is your lifestyle like look not just Sunday but your Monday your Tuesday your Wednesday what can people expect from you on a consistent basis in terms of the way you live the way you approach life what is your lifestyle what is your lifestyle I'll put this up here just to help you remember it the most important evidence of your verbal profession of faith is your daily progression of faith you may make a verbal profession but what is your daily progression look like how are you living out your life 1st Peter 3 16 here at the bottom of the screen keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you're slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame that's how we live among a watching world who reviles the very things we speak and stand for we live a life of good godly example so that there's no credence to what they're saying they can't get a hook in it then he moves quickly to love selfless investment in others for their well-being boy what a definition the world understands and regularly practices give and take you scratch my back I'll scratch yours

I give a little I give a lot I expect a lot in return but the world doesn't know anything about this kind of love it doesn't know anything of give a lot and expect nothing in return it was enough for Jesus to go to the cross because he wanted to do the will of the father not my will but your will be done you're all familiar with this verse he gave his only son that's love in this one this is my commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you that's the model that's the example this is what Paul is telling Timothy to be be an example your example is your Lord giving his life to love you now Timothy you go forward and do the same he moves very quickly to faith faith here is the quality of being faithful this is you living out your faith be an example of faithfulness to God in all things at all times remain steadfast be focused be a trustworthy steward of the grace of God in fact look look at what he tells him remember those who led you who spoke the word of God to you and considering the result of their conduct imitate their faith in Hebrews look at those who lead you and imitate their conduct what a mandate be an example be an example and then finally he ends with this purity it's possible most likely that this is a reference primarily to sexual purity in his life but our church we understand stands or falls on our commitment to holiness and that's the point the point is a holy pastor a holy church a holy people coming together to promote holiness in their lives together as people come to grace church and get to know us we want our life here to reflect our willingness to help each other battle sin in all of its forms to encourage one another and being increasingly like Jesus we don't want to miss the main thing do we and that's the main thing we grow in our commitment to be uncompromising about the truth folks listen I don't I don't know of a greater answer to the world's skepticism sarcasm and scorn toward Christianity and for Christians to live godly Christ-like lives amen that's what we're called to and you know when they see us fall and falter what they should see in the church are people who are willing to wade into that mess and shoulder the burden with each other right so whatever your mess is whatever my mess is

I'm not afraid to go in and get that mess on me as I lean down and put that mess on my shoulder and stand up and help you bear it in the Lord whatever gets on me in the process okay what's important is that I'm here to get that on me with you you're there for each other the world doesn't understand that what the world wants to do is they see you do this and they want to know what's in it for you right you got some agenda you're only doing that what are you getting out of it and when you tell them a mess I'm getting out of it a mess and I'm being faithful to the Lord that's it yep and of course they don't understand that you know why because they don't understand the cross my prayers that will all fulfill our ministries with the proper focus a biblical one a determination that stems from love for Jesus and we'll never ever forget that that's why we're doing it because we love Jesus let's pray together well father we've hurried through some of this text as we've contemplated living out the truth of what you gave to Timothy through the apostle Paul that Timothy would be a man of God godliness godlike in his life and I pray that Greg and I will give ourselves to walking in holiness dealing with our sin and our self

I know my friend well enough to know that he's as disgusted in his life with sin and hypocrisy as I am in mine and so I pray for our ourselves I ask you God to help Greg and I to walk faithfully before you with much love and patience and kindness in the meekness of Jesus with our wives and our kids and then out from our immediate family to our church family that they will always find in us while they won't find perfect men they will find in us men who are seeking to be like Jesus they can count on us to never quit on Christ or them and I pray that you will help these precious souls today to realize the privilege that they live in as they have the opportunity to minister your truth to each other building treasure in heaven and being faithful to your calling on their lives to make a difference for Jesus in each other Lord don't let us neglect that as the psalmist said cause us to want to be in your word cause us to be a kind and loving people because we love you we thank you in Jesus name amen thank you for your kind ■■■■

I think for your■■■ history all we do are how do we we make ouries that the s